

Announcement of Opportunity for Federal Funding

Overview

Agency Name: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 4

Funding Opportunity Title: Monitoring, Data Management, and Special Studies - South Florida Geographic Initiative, Water Quality Protection Program for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative/Land-Based Sources of Pollution

Announcement Type: Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP)

Funding Opportunity Number: EPA-R4-WMD-08-01

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.436 – Water Quality and Watershed Management: Surveys, Studies and Investigations; Grants and Cooperative Agreements; Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act

Dates:

Initial Proposals Submitted to EPA, Region 4	April 30, 2008
Announcement of Selected Initial Proposals/Request for Full Proposals	May 14, 2008*
Full Proposals Submitted to EPA, Region 4	June 16, 2008*
Review and Ranking of Full Proposals	July 31, 2008*
Announcement of Full Proposals Selected for Funding and Contact Applicants to Request Applications for Federal Assistance	August 8, 2008*
Completed Applications Submitted to EPA, Region 4	September 5, 2008*
Notice to Applicants that Applications/Work Plans have been Approved	September 19, 2008*
Target Date for Award	November 1, 2008*

* Anticipated Dates

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Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Funding Topics. Under this announcement, EPA is interested in proposals for the programs and topics described below. Applicants may submit multiple proposals under this announcement but each one must be for a different project.

1. Water Quality Protection Program for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Background

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) was created with the signing of Public Law 101-605, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act of 1990. Included in the Sanctuary are 2,900 square nautical miles of nearshore waters extending from Biscayne Bay to the Dry Tortugas. The 1990 Act directed EPA and the State of Florida, in consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to develop a Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) for the Sanctuary. The FKNMS is the first designated marine sanctuary required to have a WQPP.

Beginning in 1991, EPA and the State of Florida worked with NOAA and other federal, state, and local government agencies, university scientists, environmental groups, and the public to develop a WQPP for the Sanctuary. The “Final Water Quality Protection Program Document” was approved by the WQPP Steering Committee in September 1996 and contains the rationale and strategies to achieve the goals of the WQPP. The National Marine Sanctuaries Program Amendments Act of 1992 requires that EPA and the State of Florida implement the WQPP in cooperation with NOAA.

The purpose of the WQPP is to recommend priority corrective actions and compliance schedules addressing point and nonpoint sources of pollution to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Sanctuary. This includes restoration and maintenance of a balanced, indigenous population of corals, shellfish, fish and wildlife, and recreational activities in and on the water. In addition, the Act requires the development of a comprehensive water quality monitoring program. EPA and the State of Florida have primary responsibility for implementing the comprehensive monitoring and special studies programs for the Sanctuary. EPA has provided the majority of funding (about \$13,000,000) for the monitoring activities and the special studies projects with assistance from NOAA, South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Monroe County, and private environmental groups. This announcement concerns the monitoring and data management components of the WQPP that have been incorporated into the FKNMS’s Science Plan.

Monitoring and Data Management Activities

A comprehensive status and trends monitoring program was established throughout the Sanctuary “to detect change”. The objectives of the monitoring program are to evaluate the

effectiveness of efforts to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution and to evaluate progress toward achieving and maintaining water quality and protecting and restoring the coral reefs and other living resources of the Sanctuary. The long-term status and trends monitoring program, which includes water quality, coral reef and seagrass components was initiated in 1995 and is now in its fourteenth year. Scopes of work for existing monitoring projects are in Attachment I and are provided for your information. The WQPP also includes a geographic information system (GIS) based data management program (scope of work included in Attachment H) which was developed by the Florida Marine Research Institute of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The long-term monitoring projects are conducted by Florida International University/Southeast Environmental Research Center (water quality and seagrass monitoring projects) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (coral reef monitoring project). The monitoring projects are funded via existing federal assistance agreements with EPA, Region 4. We seek proposals to continue the existing/ongoing long-term monitoring and data management projects.

2. Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative/Land-Based Sources of Pollution

Background

In 1998, The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established by Presidential Executive Order #13089 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. In October 2002, the USCRTF passed a resolution to improve implementation of the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. Among other things, the resolution identified six focus areas for priority action (land-based sources of pollution, over fishing, lack of public awareness, recreational overuse and misuse, climate change and coral bleaching, and disease) and recommended development of local action strategies (LASs) for relevant focus areas. The development of LASs to improve coordinated implementation of coral reef conservation was a centerpiece of the resolution. The LAS is intended as a 3-year road map for collaborative action to address key threats to coral reefs and is strategic rather than comprehensive, focusing on a few specific issues in a well-defined geographic area.

In May 2003, an interagency group (federal, state, regional, and local governments) of resource professionals familiar with the southeast Florida coral reef ecosystem north of the Florida Keys met in southeast Florida to begin development of a LAS. The LAS for coral reef conservation and management in southeast Florida was finalized in December 2004 and includes the following focus areas: land-based sources of pollution; fishing, diving and other uses; maritime industry and coastal construction impacts; and awareness and appreciation. EPA Region 4 staff works closely with representatives of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to coordinate and facilitate the activities of the land-based sources of pollution (LBSP) focus team. The LBSP focus team and associated technical advisory committee (TAC) are composed of representatives from various government agencies, universities, NGOs, and the general public and has developed a LAS to reduce the impacts of land-based sources of pollution to the coral reef habitat in coastal waters of Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin Counties, Florida. The goals of the LAS for LBSP are as follows: characterize the existing condition of the coral

reef ecosystem; quantify, characterize and prioritize the land-based sources of pollution that need to be addressed based on identified impacts to the coral reef community; identify how pollution affects the southeast Florida coral reef ecosystem; reduce the impacts of land-based sources of pollution to the coral reef ecosystem; and increase public awareness and understanding of the effects of land-based sources of pollution on water quality and coral reef habitat. The LBSP focus team developed action strategies or projects for each goal and the LBSP TAC developed conceptual scopes of work for the projects and prioritized the work effort.

Special Studies Projects

The goals of the special studies program are to: 1. Quantify, characterize, and prioritize the land-based sources of pollution that need to be addressed based on identified impacts to the coral reef ecosystem; and 2. Identify how land-based sources of pollution affect southeast Florida coral reef ecosystems. Special studies projects must address at least one of the priority topics listed below.

Priority Topics for Special Studies

- **Identification of Sources and Signals of Land-based Pollution in Southeast Florida Reefs**

Coral reef communities in southeast Florida are downstream from a range of potential pollution streams including land-based sources such as agricultural runoff, sewage outfalls, and storm water. There is insufficient information to definitively link degradation of coral reef habitat with land-based sources of pollution. Demonstration of indicators of land-based pollutants in reef organisms is a necessary step in establishing this definitive link. We seek proposals to investigate chemical or biological tracers in reef organisms to evaluate exposure to land-based pollutants. Examples might include stable isotopes or microbiological tracers. It would be especially valuable to demonstrate changes in exposure over time as well as present exposure.

- **Linking Ecological Performance to Pollutant Exposure**

In order to definitively link coral reef degradation with land-based sources of pollution in southeast Florida (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin Counties), it is necessary to demonstrate that pollutant exposure at quantifiable levels affects the ecological performance of reef organisms, populations, or communities. We seek proposals to demonstrate effects of pollutants on organisms. Such effects may include physiological, organismal level (e.g. growth, fecundity) or population level responses. Experimental studies that can demonstrate cause-effect relationships would be particularly valuable.

B. Linkage of Projects to EPA's Strategic Plan and Anticipated Outputs

1. Linkage to Strategic Plan

The monitoring projects, data management, and special studies included in this announcement of the federal funding opportunity support EPA's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, Goal 4: "Healthy

Communities and Ecosystems - Protect, sustain, or restore the health of people, communities, and ecosystems using integrated and comprehensive approaches and partnerships”; Objective 4.3: “Restore and Protect Critical Ecosystems - Protect, sustain, and restore the health of critical natural habitats and ecosystems”; and Sub-objective 4.3.7: “Restore and Protect the South Florida Ecosystem - Protect and maintain the south Florida ecosystem, including the Everglades and coral reef ecosystems.”

2. Outputs/Outcomes

In compliance with EPA Order 5700.7 on environmental results, EPA-funded projects must address outputs and/or outcomes and how these will be tracked and measured. Outputs refer to activities and work products that contribute to producing environmental outcomes. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the funding period. Outcomes refer to the results, effects, or consequences that will occur from carrying out activities. Outcomes are always quantitative. Examples of outputs for projects associated with this announcement include:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of efforts to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution and to evaluate progress toward achieving and maintaining water quality and protecting and restoring coral reef habitat and other living resources.
- Characterization of sources and causes of water quality impairment within a watershed that will allow the development of management/action/restoration plan(s).
- Preparation and timely delivery of quarterly and draft/final project reports that document results of the special study or monitoring project.

Examples of expected outcomes that may occur because of the technical/scientific information generated by the monitoring and special studies projects associated with this announcement include:

- Increase knowledge of managers and elected officials concerning negative impacts of pollutants on water quality and living biological resources, which should lead to the development and implementation of action plans that will reduce pollutant loading and result in the conservation of natural resources.
- Maintenance and/or improvement of water quality.
- Maintenance of health of seagrass beds.
- Restoration and/or maintenance of coral reef habitat.
- Reduce pollutant loading to inland, nearshore and coastal waters.

C. Funding Authority

EPA Region 4 will award the funds associated with this announcement under the authority of Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act, which authorizes federal assistance agreements for conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies relating to the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction and elimination of pollution.

Section II. Award Information

A. Total Amount Expected to be Awarded

EPA Region 4 anticipates receiving approximately \$1,060,000 of FY 2008 money to fund the comprehensive monitoring projects (water quality, coral reef, and seagrass) and the data management program for the FKNMS. It is anticipated that NOAA may also provide up to \$310,000 and if approved by the Florida Legislature FDEP could provide up to \$100,000. Total expected funds for the FKNMS monitoring projects and data management is anticipated to be about \$1,470,000 for FY 2009 activities.

EPA may receive approximately \$100,000 of FY 2008 money that could be used to fund special studies for the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative/Land-Based Sources of Pollution Program. Additional funds may be available from the FY 2009 annual appropriation. Total funds for the Land-Based Sources of Pollution Program are anticipated to be about \$200,000 for FY 2009 through 2010 for projects with workplans covering up to two years.

The total amount of funding and awards that will be made under this announcement will depend on funding availability, the quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations.

B. Anticipated Number of Awards

EPA anticipates making a total of five awards under this announcement. One award for each of the monitoring projects (water quality, coral reef, and seagrass) and one award for the data management program. If funds are available, NOAA will provide a portion of the funding for the coral reef and seagrass monitoring projects. If the Florida Legislature appropriates funds, FDEP will provide a portion of the funding for the water quality monitoring project.

The number of awards for special studies will depend on the budgets of the full proposals submitted. However, provided that funds are available, EPA anticipates making a minimum of one award for a special study for the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative/Land-Based Sources of Pollution Program.

C. Amount of Individual Awards

The award amount for the monitoring and data management projects will be based upon the scopes of work for each individual project and the total budget for each project can not exceed

the anticipated FY 2009 annual project budget (see list below) for monitoring and data management projects. The goal is to continue the existing status and trends monitoring projects and the data management project.

Anticipated FY 2009 Annual Budgets

Water Quality Monitoring Project - \$730,000
Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project - \$400,000
Seagrass Monitoring Project - \$280,000
Data Management Project - \$60,000
Special Studies Projects not to Exceed \$100,000

Final decisions on the amount of each award will be dependent on sufficient funding in EPA's annual appropriation and the amount of funds made available to the South Florida Geographic Initiative, WQPP for the FKNMS, and Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative/Land-Based Sources of Pollution Program and the quality of proposals received.

Unless pre-award costs are specifically approved by EPA, recipients should not incur project costs, including nonfederal match, until they receive an award offer from EPA.

D. Anticipated Start and End Dates

Federal assistance agreements for the monitoring and data management projects will be awarded for two years, FY 2009 and FY 2010, with the project and budget periods beginning on or about November 1, 2008 and ending on September 30, 2010. Federal assistance agreements for the special studies projects will be awarded for FY 2009 with the project and budget periods beginning on or about November 1, 2008. However, special studies may cover one or two years and therefore, the project and budget periods may end on September 30, 2009, or September 30, 2010.

E. Type of Assistance

Accepted proposals submitted by non-federal applicants will be funded via federal assistance agreements in the form of a grant or cooperative agreement. For most projects associated with the WQPP for the FKNMS, a cooperative agreement is the preferred funding mechanism. The principal purpose of the federal and non-federal relationship established by a cooperative agreement is the transfer of money to the recipient to accomplish a "public purpose" of support or stimulation; in addition, there will be substantial involvement between the federal agency and the recipient during performance of the activity, establishing the agency as a "partner" during performance.

EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement or make fewer than expected.

In appropriate circumstances, EPA reserves the right to partially fund proposals/applications by funding discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If EPA decides to partially fund a proposal/application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal/application, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process.

Section III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Assistance under this program is generally available to States, territories, Indian Tribes, and possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia); public and private universities and colleges; hospitals; laboratories; and other public or private nonprofit institutions and individuals. Nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply.

B. Cost Sharing or Match

There is no required match. However, EPA encourages leveraging which will be evaluated in Section V.

C. Threshold Criteria

Initial Proposals from eligible applicants must meet these requirements or else they will be rejected. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified within 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

- Proposed projects for the monitoring and data management projects can not exceed the anticipated FY 2009 annual project budget (see list in Section II C) for monitoring and data management projects.
- Proposals for the special studies projects must address at least one of the priority topics described in Section I and must not exceed a total of \$100,000 per proposal.
- Initial and full proposals must substantially comply with the proposal submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section IV of this announcement or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section IV with respect to the initial proposal or full proposal, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed.
- Initial proposals must be received by the EPA or received through www.grants.gov, as specified in Section IV of this announcement, on or before the initial proposal submission deadline published in Section IV of this announcement. Applicants are responsible for

ensuring that their proposal reaches the designated person/office specified in Section IV of the announcement by the submission deadline.

- Initial proposals received after the submission deadline will be considered late and returned to the sender without further consideration unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that it was late due to EPA mishandling. For hard copy submissions, where Section IV requires proposal receipt by a specific person/office by the submission deadline, receipt by an agency mailroom is not sufficient. Applicants should confirm receipt of their proposal with the intended recipient as soon as possible after the submission deadline—failure to do so may result in your proposal not being reviewed.

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Initial Proposal

Submission of an initial proposal is required. Potential applicants interested in submitting an initial proposal in response to this announcement should immediately complete the Notice-of-Interest Form (Attachment A) and send it to the address or FAX number provided on the form not later than ten days after the date the announcement is issued. Five copies of the initial proposal (if submitted via hard copy) must be received as described below no later than April 30, 2008. Initial proposals must consist of an Initial Proposal Title Page (Attachment B) and no more than three single spaced pages of text (12 point Times New Roman font). Initial proposals sent thru grants.gov must also include the SF 424 form. The initial proposal should include the following components: project title; funding topic from Section I. A; principal investigator(s); introduction/background; summary of major tasks and objectives; plan for tracking progress towards achieving the expected project outcomes and outputs including those identified in Section I; and estimated budget.

B. Full Proposal

Applicants whose initial proposals merit further consideration will be notified by around May 14, 2008, as to whether a full proposal should be submitted for review. The deadline for submission of a full proposal will be communicated at that time (the expected deadline is June 16, 2008). In order to simplify the review process, obtain the maximum degree of comparison, and provide a fair and equitable evaluation of proposals, reviewers will rely on the content of the full proposal for evaluation purposes. Therefore, it is important that all full proposals are complete and adhere to the standard format that is described in detail in Attachment C. Each full proposal must consist of the following components:

1. Proposal Submission Checklist (Attachment D)
2. Applicant Agreement (Attachment E)
3. Proposal Cover Sheet (Attachment F)
4. Proposal Summary Sheets (Attachment G)
5. Proposal Text

6. Budget Information (Budget Summary and EPA Standard Form 424A)

Attachments D, E, F, and G are forms to be completed and signed where appropriate. Instructions and blank forms are provided as attachments to this announcement. All forms, including the budget sheet should be attached at the beginning of the proposal.

Proposal text (Sections A-E below) must be no greater than twelve single spaced pages (minimum, 12 point Times New Roman font) including tables and figures, but not literature cited – excess pages will not be reviewed. The full proposal text shall contain the following text sections:

- A. Introduction
 - 1. Situation, Need and Previous Efforts
 - 2. Objectives
 - 3. Application, Benefits and Importance
- B. Methods and Approach
 - 1. Description of Major Tasks
 - 2. Environmental Impact
 - 3. Future Efforts
- C. Project Management
 - 1. Administration
 - 2. Roles and Assignments
 - 3. Biographies and Qualifications
- D. Support Requirements and Conditions
 - 1. Cooperation from Other Organizations
 - 2. Data and/or Facility Access
- E. Results/Outputs and Deliverables
 - 1. Quarterly Progress Reports
 - 2. Final Report
 - 3. Plan and Schedule for Tracking Deliverable Items
- F. Literature Cited
- G. Budget Information
 - 1. Summary, Including Co-Funding
 - 2. EPA Form (SF 424A)
- H. Biographies and Qualifications
- I. Past Performance and Programmatic Capability

- J. Leveraging
- K. Appendices (maximum of three pages)

Attachment C contains further definition of the above sections, including suggested format, length, organization, and content for each section.

C. Initial Proposal and Proposal Submission

Initial proposals and full proposals must be signed by an official representing the applicant's institution or employer. Initial proposals may be submitted via hard copy or through grants.gov as explained in D below. As stated above, five copies (if submitted by hard copy) of the initial proposal package must be received by the EPA Region 4 contact listed below or through grants.gov no later than April 30, 2008. After notification that an initial proposal merits further consideration, fifteen copies of a full proposal must be submitted. Further instructions on the due date for the full proposal will be provided as well as instructions on how to submit them via hard copy only. Please punch each of the initial proposals and full proposal copies for a standard three-ring binder and send to the appropriate individual listed below.

For Special Studies:

Dr. Bill Kruczynski
c/o Florida Keys National
Marine Sanctuary
11399 Overseas Highway
Suite 3
Marathon, FL 33050

For Monitoring/Data Management:

Mr. Fred McManus
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 4, Coastal Section
61 Forsyth Street
Atlanta, GA 30303

D. Instructions for Electronic Submission of Initial Proposal

If you wish to submit your initial proposal electronically via Grants.gov, please follow the appropriate instructions below. Applicants may submit their initial proposal materials electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>.

If you wish to apply electronically via Grants.gov, the electronic submission of your initial proposal must be made by an official representative of your institution who is registered with Grants.gov and authorized to sign applications for Federal assistance.

For more information, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on "Get Started," and then click on "For AORs" (Authorized Organization Representative) on the left side of the page. *Note that the registration process may take a week or longer to complete.* If your organization is not currently registered with Grants.gov, please encourage your office to designate an AOR and ask that individual to begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To begin the proposal process under this grant announcement, go to <http://www.grants.gov> and click on the “Apply for Grants” tab on the left side of the page. Then click on “Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package” to download the compatible Adobe viewer and obtain the application package. **To apply through grants.gov you must use Adobe Reader applications and download the compatible Adobe Reader version ([Adobe Reader applications](#) are available to download for free on the Grants.gov website. For more information on Adobe Reader please visit the [Help section](#) on grants.gov at <http://www.grants.gov/help/help.jsp> or http://www.grants.gov/aboutgrants/program_status.jsp).**

Initial proposal materials submitted through grants.gov will be time/date stamped electronically. Please be sure to view the additional instructions for applying electronically under this announcement through use of grants.gov that are attached as Attachment H. If you have any technical difficulties while applying electronically, please refer to <http://www.grants.gov/CustomerSupport>.

E. Confidential Business Information

In accordance with 40 CFR 2.203, applicants may claim all or a portion of their application/proposal as confidential business information. EPA will evaluate confidentiality claims in accordance with 40 CFR Part 2. Applicants must clearly mark applications/proposals or portions of applications/proposals they claim as confidential. If no claim of confidentiality is made, EPA is not required to make the inquiry to the applicant otherwise required by 40 CFR 2.204(c)(2) prior to disclosure.

F. Communications with Applicants

In accordance with EPA's Assistance Agreement Competition Policy (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA staff will not meet with individual applicants to discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria. Applicants are responsible for the contents of their applications/proposals. However, EPA will respond to questions in writing from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement.

G. Management Fees

When formulating budgets for proposals/applications, applicants must not include management fees or similar charges in excess of the direct costs and indirect costs at the rate approved by the applicants cognizant audit agency, or at the rate provided for by the terms of the agreement negotiated with EPA. The term "management fees or similar charges" refers to expenses added to the direct costs in order to accumulate and reserve funds for ongoing business expenses, unforeseen liabilities, or for other similar costs that are not allowable under EPA assistance agreements. Management fees or similar charges may not be used to improve or expand the project funded under this agreement, except to the extent authorized as a direct cost of carrying out the scope of work.

H. Contracts and Subawards

a. Can funding be used for the applicant to make subawards, acquire contract services, or fund partnerships?

EPA awards funds to one eligible applicant as the recipient even if other eligible applicants are named as partners or co-applicants or members of a coalition or consortium. The recipient is accountable to EPA for the proper expenditure of funds.

Funding may be used to provide subgrants or subawards of financial assistance, which includes using subawards or subgrants to fund partnerships, provided the recipient complies with applicable requirements for subawards or subgrants including those contained in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. Applicants must compete contracts for services and products, including consultant contracts, and conduct cost and price analyses, to the extent required by the procurement provisions of the regulations at 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as appropriate. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify subawardees/subgrantees and/or contractors (including consultants) in their proposal/application. However, if they do, the fact that an applicant selected for award has named a specific subawardee/subgrantee, contractor, or consultant in the proposal/application EPA selects for funding does not relieve the applicant of its obligations to comply with subaward/subgrant and/or competitive procurement requirements as appropriate. Please note that applicants may not award sole source contracts to consulting, engineering or other firms assisting applicants with the proposal solely based on the firm's role in preparing the proposal/application.

Successful applicants cannot use subgrants or subawards to avoid requirements in EPA grant regulations for competitive procurement by using these instruments to acquire commercial services or products from for-profit organizations to carry out its assistance agreement. The nature of the transaction between the recipient and the subawardee or subgrantee must be consistent with the standards for distinguishing between vendor transactions and subrecipient assistance under Subpart B Section .210 of OMB Circular A-133, and the definitions of subaward at 40 CFR 30.2(ff) or subgrant at 40 CFR 31.3, as applicable. EPA will not be a party to these transactions. Applicants acquiring commercial goods or services must comply with the competitive procurement standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR Part 31.36 and cannot use a subaward/subgrant as the funding mechanism.

b. How will an applicant's proposed subawardees/subgrantees and contractors be considered during the evaluation process described in Section V of the announcement?

Section V of the announcement describes the evaluation criteria and evaluation process that will be used by EPA to make selections under this announcement. During this evaluation, except for those criteria that relate to the applicant's own qualifications, past performance, and reporting history, the review panel will consider, as appropriate and relevant, the qualifications, expertise, and experience of:

(i) an applicant's named subawardees/subgrantees identified in the proposal/application if the applicant demonstrates in the proposal/application that if it receives an award that the subaward/subgrant will be properly awarded consistent with the applicable regulations in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31. For example, applicants must not use subawards/subgrants to obtain commercial services or products from for profit firms or individual consultants.

(ii) an applicant's named contractor(s), including consultants, identified in the proposal/application if the applicant demonstrates in its proposal/application that the contractor(s) was selected in compliance with the competitive Procurement Standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR 31.36 as appropriate. For example, an applicant must demonstrate that it selected the contractor(s) competitively or that a proper non-competitive sole-source award consistent with the regulations will be made to the contractor(s), that efforts were made to provide small and disadvantaged businesses with opportunities to compete, and that some form of cost or price analysis was conducted. EPA may not accept sole source justifications for contracts for services or products that are otherwise readily available in the commercial marketplace.

EPA will not consider the qualifications, experience, and expertise of named subawardees/subgrantees and/or named contractor(s) during the proposal/application evaluation process unless the applicant complies with these requirements.

Section V. Application Review Information

A. Initial Proposal Evaluation

Initial proposals that meet the threshold eligibility requirements in Section III will be evaluated by the Management Committee of the WQPP and technical staff from EPA and NOAA. Reviewers will sign a conflict of interest statement and be removed from the review panel if they have a conflict that cannot be resolved. Evaluation of initial proposals will be based on a qualitative review of them based on the extent and quality to which they address the elements of the initial proposal as described in Section IV.A. Monitoring and data management initial proposals will be evaluated separately from initial proposals for special studies.

B. Full Proposal

Applicants who submit initial proposals that merit further consideration will be asked to submit full proposals as explained in Section IV and the full proposals will be reviewed by two to five mail reviewers and a formal external review panel.

All reviewers will be required to sign a conflict of interest statement. Reviewers who have a conflict of interest will be removed from the review panel.

Full proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria:

- Rationale - how well the proposed project addresses program goals and objectives as described in Section I of the announcement and/or existing scopes of work for

ongoing monitoring projects (**20 points**).

- Scientific Merit - how well the project advances the state of the science and our knowledge and the design of the scientific program (**20 points**).
- Feasibility - ability of the project to be successfully completed within the time frames discussed in this announcement and other constraints (**15 points**).
- Relevance to Resource Management - degree to which approaches and anticipated results/outputs can be applied to identifying and solving problems in resource management (**15 points**).
- Past Performance and Qualifications of Investigators and Sufficient Laboratory Capabilities - under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project taking into account the applicant's: (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project performed within the last 3 years, (ii) history of meeting reporting requirements under federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project performed within the last 3 years and submitting acceptable final technical reports under those agreements, (iii) organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and (iv) staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project. Note: In evaluating applicants under this criterion, the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance or reporting history (items i and ii above), will receive a neutral score (1.25 points) for those elements of this criterion (**10 points-2.5 points for each subfactor**).
- Budget - whether the proposed budget is reasonable and adequate to carry out proposed project (**10 points**).
- Environmental Results Past Performance - under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they adequately documented and/or reported on their progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outcomes and outputs) under Federal agency assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) performed within the last three years, and if such progress was not
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being made whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not. Note: In evaluating applicants under this factor, EPA will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). Applicants with no relevant or available past performance reporting history will receive a neutral score for this factor (**5 points**).

- Leveraging - under this criteria, applicants will be evaluated based on the extent they demonstrate (i) how they will coordinate the use of EPA funding with other federal and/or non-federal sources of funds to leverage additional resources to carry out the proposed project(s) and/or (ii) that EPA funding will compliment activities relevant to the proposed project(s) carried out by the applicant with other sources of funds or resources. Applicants may use their own funds or other resources for a voluntary match or cost share if the standards at 40 CFR 30.23 or 40 CFR 31.24, as applicable, are met. Only eligible and allowable costs may be used for matches or cost shares. Other Federal grants may not be used as matches or cost shares without specific statutory authority (e.g. HUD's Community Development Block Grants). Any form of proposed leveraging that is evaluated under a Section V ranking criteria must be included in the proposal and the proposal must describe how the applicant will obtain the leveraged resources and what role EPA funding will play in the overall project (**5 points**).

Potential applicants should be aware that the monitoring and data management full proposals will be evaluated and ranked separately from full proposals for special studies. Full proposals for monitoring and data management will be evaluated and ranked as a group and full proposals for special studies will be evaluated and ranked as a group. Highly ranked proposals from each category will be presented to the FKNMS's TAC for review. The TAC will then evaluate the highly-ranked full proposals based on their relevance to the goals and objectives of the FKNMS's Science Plan, the scopes of work for the ongoing long-term monitoring projects, and the goals of the SEFCRI LBSP special studies program and provide recommendations to the EPA. EPA will make the final selection of full proposals for funding based on the TAC recommendations and may also consider programmatic priorities in making final selection decisions. It is intended that federal assistance agreements will be awarded during the first quarter of FY 2009 with project and budget periods to begin on the first day of FY 2009 (October 1, 2008) or as soon as possible thereafter.

Section VI. Award Administration Information

A. Application for Federal Assistance

If a full proposal is selected for funding, the applicant will be contacted by EPA Region 4 staff by around July 18, 2008, and required to submit an Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424 A & B and applicable attachments and information) and a final project workplan to Region 4 no later than around August 18, 2008.

A listing and description of general EPA Regulations applicable to the award of assistance agreements may be viewed at:

http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/applicable_epa_regulations_and_description.htm

Assistance agreement competition-related disputes will be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution procedures published in 70 FR (Federal Register) 3629, 3630 (January 26, 2005) which can be found at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/05-1371.htm>. Copies of these procedures may also be requested by contacting Fred McManus at (404) 562-9385, or email at mcmanus.fred@epa.gov.

Nonprofit Administrative Capability Clause: Non-profit applicants that are recommended for funding under this announcement are subject to pre-award administrative capability reviews consistent with Section 8b, 8c and 9d of EPA Order 5700.8 - Policy on Assessing Capabilities of Non-Profit Applicants for Managing Assistance Awards (http://www.epa.gov/ogd/grants/award/5700_8.pdf). In addition, non-profit applicants that qualify for funding may, depending on the size of the award, be required to fill out and submit to the Grants Management Office the Administrative Capabilities Form with supporting documents contained in Appendix A of EPA Order 5700.8.

B. Intergovernmental Reviews

The funds associated with this announcement require Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs”, review. E.O. 12372 structures the federal government’s system of consultation with state and local governments on its decisions involving grants, other forms of financial assistance, and direct development. Under E.O. 12372, states, in consultation with their local governments, design their own review processes and select the federal financial assistance and direct development activities they wish to review. If selected for funding, the recipient of the federal assistance agreement will be required to send a copy of their application and proposal to the appropriate State Clearinghouse Office for an intergovernmental review.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

State and Local Governments and Tribes: *40 CFR Part 31, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, or*

Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Organizations: *40 CFR Part 30, Uniform Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Nonprofit Organizations.*

EPA uses the following guidelines in determining costs applicable to federal assistance agreements:

For Educational Institutions: *OMB Circular A-21, Cost principles for Educational Institutions.*

For State and Local Governments and Indian Tribes: *OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State and Local Governments.*

For Nonprofit Organizations: *OMB Circular A-122, Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations*

D. Award Notice

Formal EPA approval of the Application for Federal Assistance and workplan will be made in the form of a written offer of a federal assistance agreement, most likely a cooperative agreement. Costs incurred prior to the award date will not be reimbursed by EPA unless specifically approved in the assistance agreement. EPA cannot make any payments to the award recipient until we receive an executed assistance agreement from the recipient. Payments will generally be made on a reimbursable basis.

E. Reporting Requirements

Quarterly reports will be required for monitoring projects and special studies. The federal assistance agreement recipient shall provide quarterly reports to the EPA project officer. The reports shall consist of updates on progress toward work objectives, justification, approach, results to date, any problems encountered, actions taken to resolve problems, discussion of remaining tasks, and expenditures to date. Quarterly reports will be due within 45 days after the end of each quarter.

Recipients of federal assistance agreements will be required to submit a draft final report that summarizes the objectives, methods, approach, results, and significance of each project or study. The draft final report will be reviewed by the EPA project officer and returned with comments. The recipient of the federal assistance agreement will address the comments and submit a final report to the EPA project officer with revisions. The final report will be due within six months of the completion of the project.

F. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

Recipients of federal assistance agreements will be required to develop and submit a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) to the EPA project officer. Approval of the QAPP is required before work can begin or any data can be collected. Through the plan, the recipient explicitly commits to incorporating procedures that will reduce and maintain random and systematic errors within specified tolerable limits. In addition, the recipient of a federal assistance agreement will document quality control procedures and evaluate the quality of the data being produced. Plans should include or refer to a description of safety, training and equipment maintenance. Data quality objectives will be developed to ensure the utility of data for the applications. The QAPP

will be prepared according to the format prescribed in "EPA requirements for Quality Assurance Project Plans for Environmental Data Operations, EPA OA/R-5". The recipient should develop the QAPP in close coordination with the EPA Region 4 QA/QC Officer and the EPA project officer. If requested, EPA will provide a QAPP on file with Region 4 to assist recipients with preparation of their QAPPs.

G. Data Management

Under cooperative agreements with EPA Region 4 and NOAA/FKNMS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) manage a data management plan and data management system for the monitoring and special studies programs associated with the FKNMS. Each recipient of a federal assistance agreement for monitoring and special studies projects will work with the designated data management entity to define data entry conventions and issues. All original and ancillary data produced under the monitoring and special studies programs will be generated, processed, stored and archived in a manner that provides detailed documentation of the procedures used during all stages of data collection, reduction, processing, analysis, and storage.

H. Publications

Recipients of federal assistance agreements for special studies are expected to submit manuscripts on the funded projects to appropriate scientific journals within one year of the completion of the final report. Recipients of federal assistance agreements for monitoring projects are expected to submit manuscripts to appropriate scientific journals at an appropriate time during and/or after the completion of the project. The appropriate time for submission of manuscripts will be negotiated with the EPA project officer. Authors are expected to cite support from the specific sponsor of their project or study in all publications resulting wholly or partially from sponsored activities. For example, an appropriate acknowledgment would be as follows:

"This project/study was funded by a federal assistance agreement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to assistance Number _____."

Reprints of any abstract, article or other publication that result from this sponsored project /study should be sent to the EPA project officer.

I. Public Relations

Official press releases on the monitoring and special studies projects may be prepared by EPA Region 4 and/or FKNMS staff to be used by all recipients of federal assistance agreements for distribution to the news media. Principal investigators are not prohibited from discussing their projects with news media; however, principal investigators should notify their EPA project officer of any contacts with the news media regarding monitoring and special studies projects funded via federal assistance agreements.

Section VII. Agency Contact

If you have any questions concerning this announcement of opportunity for federal funding and request for preproposals and proposals, please contact Mr. Fred McManus at (404) 562-9385, email at mcmanus.fred@epa.gov; or Dr. Bill Kruczynski at (305) 743-0537/(850) 934-9298, email at kruczynski.bill@epa.gov.